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AUTHOR Boyle-Baise, Marilynne
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ABSTRACT

The influence of philosophic perspectives on interpretations of service learning is examined in this paper. Suggestions for a philosophical framework for service learning, relating philosophic orientations to aims for multicultural education and to perspectives commonly held among preservice teachers are given. Considers the implications of this framework for multicultural teacher education. Contains a table and 37 references. (BT)

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"As Good As It Gets?" The Impact of Philosophical Orientations on Community-based Service Learning for Multicultural Education

Marilynne Boyle-Baise

Curriculum and Instruction

Indiana University

201 N. Rose

Bloomington, IN 47405

812-856-8191

boylebai@indiana.edu

SO 030 810

Marilynne Boyle-Baise

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"As Good As It Gets?" The Impact of Philosophical Orientations on Community-based Service Learning for Multicultural Education

For the last few years, I utilized community-based service learning to augment my multicultural education course for preservice teachers. Often, I found myself grappling with the following question: "why isn't it critical enough?" The service learning experience seemed to deepen appreciation of cultural diversity and to challenge overt stereotypes, but it also glossed over the nature of inequality. I struggled to contradict feelings of superiority from preservice teachers, fostered as they willingly assisted those "less fortunate" than themselves. I realized that we held different aims for service: preservice teachers hoped to be charitable, I hoped to use field-based realities to prompt discussions of inequality. I wondered if the problem was poor pedagogy on my part, an inability to structure service to promote critique, or if service learning was a "red herring" for multicultural education, an experience that encouraged deficit notions about "others." For a time, I resonated with a scene from the movie "As Good As It Gets." In this scene the main character leaves his psychiatrist's office in despair, looks around the waiting room at other patients, and asks, "what if this is as good as it gets?"

My experiences are located in a context that influences my perceptions and queries. I teach at a large research university in the Mid-west. The pre-service teacher population tends to be white, female, middle-class, from racially segregated towns, and to have little real experience of ethnic diversity, poverty, or racial bias. Due to my participation in a project which supports teacher candidates of color, my classes are integrated more than most. Still, overwhelmingly, preservice teachers are white.

As mentioned, community-based service learning was integral to my multicultural

education course. Briefly, for this course, multicultural education meant the intellectual, social, and personal development of *all* students to their highest potential, particularly ethnic minorities and economically impoverished students, who have historically been ill-served by public schools. Multicultural education transforms the entire school, confronts prejudice and discrimination (especially racism), and teaches students to challenge inequality through social action (Bennett, 1999). My aims for community-based service learning were to: provide cross-cultural contact, challenge overt biases, introduce concerns of marginalized communities, and encourage culturally responsive teaching. I intended to use the community as "text," to furnish real situations that could be examined as instances of discrimination or marginalization.

Overtime, I found that preservice teachers interpreted service learning encounters, as well as pedagogic activities related to them, in distinguishable ways. Their responses suggested systemic, philosophic screens through which service experiences were viewed. Commonly, their perceptions of diversity and poverty differed from mine and tilted toward deficit views. In order to grasp the impact of prior understandings on community-based service learning, a comprehensive examination of philosophic orientations seemed warranted.

In this paper, I examine the influence of philosophic perspectives on interpretations of service learning. First, I suggest a philosophical framework for service learning. In so doing, I relate philosophic orientations to aims for multicultural education and to perspectives held commonly among preservice teachers. Second, I consider the implications of this framework for multicultural teacher education.

Philosophic Orientations to Service Learning

I propose that varied philosophical views of "citizenship," "community," "common

good," and "difference" impact the ways instructors and preservice teachers approach service learning. Some perspectives are more amenable to multicultural education than others. However, delineation of philosophical intentions is rare; assumptions about citizenship, community, and service usually remain unquestioned. In this section, I outline multiple, philosophic stances toward service learning. The categories likely overlap and interrelate, and service learners probably hold eclectic views. I intend this framework to prompt discussion about aims for service learning, rather than to definitively identify educational approaches.

Conservative, Functional/Spiritual Views

Conservative views of service may be functional or spiritual, both position the volunteer as a benefactor to "needy" others, and both believe the person who helps another is better off for the experience. From a functional perspective, service is a form of social obligation. Through service, individuals can contribute to social betterment and requite social benefits. In a sense, a debt of gratitude is paid through assistance to the "less fortunate" (Buckley, 1990). From a spiritual orientation, service is a moral mandate. Through service, individuals can express concern for others and demonstrate personal generosity (Coles, 1993). Although, one impulse is civic and the other is humanitarian, both are charitable and rely on individual magnanimity. Both are thought to offset the need for strong government intervention, one through civic duty, the other through moral concern (Radest, 1993). Additionally, both are perceived as the mitigation of individualism; dysfunctional because it leads to isolation that is harmful to community (Bellah et al., 1985), or amoral because it leads to self-indulgence that is corruptive to the individual (Hesburgh, 1993).

In accord with these views, service learning is individually instituted, as service of one to

a needy other. Also, service is instrumentally aimed, as service that meliorates social ills (Mouffe, 1996). To this end, the redress of community problems such as family deterioration, crime, and drug abuse offers appropriate avenues for service. This is the essence of the notion that service provides "a thousand points of light" for those in need.

As charity, this functional/spiritual stance is open to charges of middle-class patronage, or acts that smack of condescension (Radest, 1993). Also, this orientation can be perceived as a nonpolitical tactic that avoids fundamental reform (Coles, 1993). This stance can be a "red herring" for multicultural education because it stimulates a sense of giving, but leaves deficit views intact. Also, it fosters a sense of affirmative action, yet glosses over social, structural problems of inequality. For example, it is unlikely that we-them distinctions are questioned, or the basis for one's fortune are interrogated.

Commonly, preservice teachers perceive community service altruistically, and their desire to help others spurs their willingness to complete service hours (Boyle-Baise, in press). To a degree, this motivation "reels them in" for community service learning, it plays on their budding sense of obligation to society or their religious upbringing. Yet, charitable dispositions are problematic for multicultural education. They can advantage the giver and humble the receiver. They can circumvent substantive change. Also, the givers can feel good about themselves and their work, unaware of the resentment their generosity may arouse.

Liberal Perspective

From a liberal perspective, community service helps shape a just and fair society. Service learning actualizes this intention in two ways: it utilizes volunteer effort to make resources (e.g., education and social services) available to the least advantaged, and it teaches youth to work

toward the alleviation of social and economic disparities. From this view, service learning teaches equality and justice, rather than provides compassion and charity (Barber, 1993). Service learning is intended to develop civic awareness and participation, informed citizens who will act to bring about social justice (Boyer & Hechinger, 1981).

Varlotta (1997) claims that liberal contract theory, proposed by Rawls (1971), underpins most contemporary discussions of community service. According to Rawls, a just society depends on equal rights and opportunities (i.e., freedom) for all. Social and economic inequalities are tolerable, as long as resources are available to everyone. Rational people will advance a just society because equal rights and opportunities benefit all citizens.

Responsive to this theory, service learners tend to engage in efforts which provide resources to the least advantaged and empower them to (eventually) help themselves. The use of volunteers to assist remedial or recreational programs for low-income youth reflects the tenets of liberal contract theory. Robert Greenleaf's (1977) concept of "servant leadership" also evokes liberal contract theory. According to Greenleaf, a leader should be a servant first, leader second. A servant leader attends to the needs of the people, and intends to help them become "healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (p. 14). In lifting the individuals served, especially those with less advantage, everyone gains.

Some advocates of service learning are concerned that a rights-based ethic overemphasizes entitlements and under-emphasizes obligations (e.g., Barber, 1992; Moskos, 1988). The achievement of one's rights and the pursuit of one's interests can distance individuals from civic affairs. These educators propose a balance between rights and responsibilities, a "recoupling" of benefits and duties (Barber, 1992). Additionally, they call for more attention to

the public good and to the recovery of civic life. These advocates alert us to the problems of individualism, privatism, and specatorship, but retain allegiance to liberal purposes.

The treatment of difference in liberal contract theory is significant for multicultural education. Rawls' (1971) proposals depend on "veiling" difference; individuals must think of themselves without the encumbrances of race, gender, and social class in order to deliberate rationally about public interest. Additionally, justice requires equal access to, not equal distribution of, resources. Equality of opportunities not outcomes follows. Finally, leadership by the privileged is indicated by the rhetoric of "help" used in this stance. These orientations tend to mask difference, restrict equality to discussions of access, and gloss over positions of advantage.

Several critics speak to these concerns. Sandel (cited in Mouffe, 1996) claims that rights-based views dislocate individuals from their particular life circumstances. Individuals are perceived as unencumbered actors who secure justice equally, based on democratic rights. Varlotta (1997) asserts that liberal tenets depict our citizenry as an undifferentiated entity and thus, skirt issues of power and multiplicity. Greenleaf (1977) posits that the privileged might not be the best servant leaders for contemporary times: "some of today's privileged. . . will find it interesting if they can abandon their present notions of how they can best serve their less favored neighbor and wait. . . until the less favored. . . define their own needs in their own way" (p. 35).

To some extent, a rights-based perspective of community service can assist aims of multicultural education. Individuals are considered equals who deserve democratic rights and opportunities. However, the cultural, social "encumbrances" of individuals must be recognized in order to uncover inequities related to earning and exercising democratic rights. Additionally, the impact of racism, sexism, and the like, on civic conversation and participation should be

addressed. Civic education about justice needs to educate about injustice. Otherwise, liberal arguments can shield inequalities in ways difficult to detect.

A rights-based approach appeals to many preservice teachers (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 1998). White preservice teachers tend to perceive people as "all alike" and expect that "everyone has an equal opportunity to learn." Commonly, these preservice teachers readily tutor children from low-income homes to help them take "full advantage" of educational opportunities, yet rarely question the preponderance of remedial assistance in after-school recreational programs.

Communitarian Views

For communitarians, the balance of rights and responsibilities tilts toward responsibilities. Too many rights and too few obligations weaken commitment to local and national communities (Etzioni, 1993). Citizens should shoulder responsibility for wise action that supports the common good. Core democratic values, such as respect for human dignity, appreciation for cultural diversity, and regard for equality, should set shared standards for conjoint, public action.

The heart of conjoint action is communal decision-making. Ideally, a diverse collective "hammers out" common aims through the application of democratic values to immediate situations (Boisvert, 1998; Festenstein, 1997). A problem for this stance relates to the diversity of the collective. In a stratified society, the "ups" tend to commune with the "ups" and the "downs" with the "downs" (Terry, cited in Sleeter, 1996). To achieve a diverse collective, group members likely cross cultural, economic, and professional borders. To communitarians, this is a wrinkle, not a wrench. It can be resolved through unrestrained interaction and robust cross-group

communication (Dewey, 1916/1966). To this end, rights-based claims are seen as immutable, poloarized positions which can harm collective deliberation (Etzioni, 1993). Instead, a moral basis for common purposes is stressed.

This stance complements multicultural education to the extent that morality and community are emphasized. People undertake joint action based on mutual respect and common ethical imperatives. For example, a mixed race, class, and gender group works together to resolve an educational concern because they believe in quality education for all children, and they respect each other's commitment. Conjoint action depends upon cross-group awareness and knowledge, gaining such knowledge is the crux of multicultural education. However, given social segregation and stratification, real, honest cross-group interaction still is rare. The communitarian view can be criticized for naive presumption of pluralistic interaction.

Presumably, the communitarian stance embraces plurality within aims for commonality (Etzioni, 1993). Deliberation is enriched by cultural diversity, and the process of consensus-building is culturally attuned. Yet, from a multicultural perspective, efforts to develop common purpose need to beware of the dominance of majority groups. However unintentional, deliberation can easily be tilted toward the achievement of a common good approved by this group (Boyle-Baise, 1997).

While this stance often is advocated by multicultural educators, it is uncommon among prospective teachers. Some research indicates that a few preservice teachers, especially those who previously experienced discrimination, are ready to "make connections" across concerns of disenfranchised groups. Also, some prospective teachers of color hope to "give back" the succor of communities, once bestowed upon them (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 1998). Probably, dispositions

toward community-building need to be taught to preservice teachers.

Some educators link liberal and communitarian views in discussions of service learning (Varlotta, 1997). Barber's nine-step service learning model is one example (1992). According to Barber, one's "ultimate goal is not to serve others, but to learn to be free, which entails being responsible to others" (1992, p. 251). Although Barber tempers liberal individualism with communal obligations, his sense of what it means to "learn to be free" is unclear. For multicultural education, questions about freedom and liberty include: who learns to be free and who is the "other" served? Learning to be free means different things to differently-located groups. Lack of attention to these issues, limits Barber's approach for multicultural education.

Radical Democratic Views

The radical democratic position offers a fourth option. Drawing upon liberal and communitarian insights, this stance is attuned to issues of culture and power. According to Fraser (1996), "to be a radical democrat today is to appreciate–and seek to eliminate–two very different kinds of impediments to democratic participation. One such impediment is social inequality; the other is the misrecognition of difference" (p. 198). Radical democracy requires social equality and multicultural recognition. For Fraser, this means recognition of the impact of one's cultural identity on claims to justice and equality. Gone here, is the unencumbered actor, rather one's identity, and the politics that surround it, influence one's experience with democracy.

The radical democrat seeks to extend liberty and equality to more areas of social life. The aim is use the resources of the liberal tradition to struggle against systemic relations of dominance (Mouffe, 1996). For example, the protection of individual rights can be utilized as a tool to fight discrimination related to race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Mouffe explains that

"a radical democratic interpretation will emphasize the numerous social relations where relations of dominance exist and must be challenged if the principles of liberty and equality are to apply" (1992, p. 236).

Further, Mouffe (1996) proposes that the valuation of liberal principles does not endorse individualism. Rather, the liberty to organize one's life as one wishes supports cultural pluralism. Multiple forms of individuality and interpretations of liberty are considered acceptable. If multiplicity is acknowledged, then consensus, as a singular common good, is an unreasonable democratic ideal. Instead, controversy characterizes democratic efforts, and should be viewed as as healthy, rather than as divisive (Fraser, 1996; Young, 1989).

From this perspective, citizens form temporary, civic associations to secure greater freedom. There can be multiple definitions of freedom and forms of activism (Mouffe, 1992). This view calls upon citizens to perceive other's struggles for equality as comparable to their own. A loose collective of "we" is construed from a "chain of equivalence" (Mouffe, 1992, p. 236) or similar demands for equality.

According to this view, terms utilized in community-based service learning, such as "democracy," "citizenship," "community," and "justice," should be reconsidered to correspond to pluralistic, democracy aims (Varlotta, 1997). Also, the understanding of difference should be emphasized as central to social life. Community service learning should help prepare preservice teachers to grapple with pluralism and comprehend movements for freedom.

Sleeter's interpretation of multicultural education as social movement fits well with this stance. According to Sleeter, the constituent base for multicultural education consists of disenfranchised people in U.S. society, "particularly parents and children of color and/or of low-

income backgrounds; children who are disabled, gay or lesbian youth, and parents or adult supporters; and girls" (1996, p. 231). Multicultural education seeks to empowerment this constituency. White educators can become allies of disenfranchised groups; they can become informed about the needs of constituents and assist in bringing about educational reform.

For community service learning, this disposition means kindling equal, respectful relations between preservice teachers and constituent groups. It means coming to understand another's cultural frame of reference (e.g., Delpit, 1995). It means tapping into "funds of wisdom" held by parents and within communities (Moll, 1992). It means grasping social conditions which marginalize people by race, disability, or gender (Grant & Sleeter, 1996). It means reassessing one's views of people with less power than oneself.

My question, "why isn't it critical enough?" is situated here. In my experience with preservice teachers, it is a formidable task to motivate concern–beyond the provision of equal opportunities--for the empowerment of disenfranchised groups. It is taxing for preservice teachers to recognize their privilege, thus they perceive little need for dramatic change. A few preservice teachers, often those of color, willingly participate in actions that empower minority communities–often going beyond course requirements to do so. A radical democratic approach to community-service learning can inform white preservice teachers about empowerment and bolster teachers-to-be who are budding activists.

Post-Modern Views

From a post-modern perspective, the self is a relational, interactive being. As social boundaries relax and traditional ethnic and racial identities reform, opportunities to acknowledge pluralism, yet foster connectedness gain significance. Community service learning is perceived

as a process of building connections across differences. It offers opportunities to grapple with the "self-other" dichotomy and to foster dialogue across cultural and social boundaries (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997; Rhoads, 1997). The promotion of an ethic-of-care, or genuine concern for the welfare of another, is fundamental to the construction of new forms of connectedness (Noddings, 1984). The sense of connection differs from the radical democratic position, people create a communion of interests based on empathy, rather than around principles of freedom and liberty. Also, caring is different from the conservative, spiritual position, people bridge differences as equals, instead of as differently-advantaged.

This approach to community building is reminiscent of Dewey's hope for a "conjoint communicated experience" (1916/1996 p. 87). Similarly, dialogue, communication, and social interchange are elemental. Yet, Dewey did not wrestle with the complexities of connections marked by cultural pluralism. Moral sensitivity, social intuitiveness, and skills in negotiation are claimed as new arts of democracy that can aid in the construction of common purposes (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997).

From a post-modern perspective, community service learning should attend to "mutuality," a reciprocal relationship in which all parties benefit from service, and to "community-building," a sense of connectedness among the parties involved (Rhoads, 1997). Important to connectedness is equality among "server" and "served" and honest attempts to feel *with* others (Noddings, 1984). Community service learning is considered an opportunity for preservice teachers to develop greater understandings of themselves and to develop caring selves. As an encounter that involves crossing cultural borders, community-service learning can unsettle one's assumptions of familiarity, prompt self-reassessment, and engender respect for different

"others" (Radest, 1993). Supposedly, when people really listen to one another, they can find common bonds that allow them to reach across barriers and form empathetic connections (Guarasi & Cornwell, 1997; Rhoads, 1997).

Previously, I participated in an effort which built connections through cross-cultural encounter (author, 1997). In this case, a diverse group of parents, community activists, and educators met overtime to consider strengthening community-university ties in order to improve multicultural teacher education. Through the power of conversation, empathy and understanding developed across cultural and social borders, and plans for collective action emerged.

The post-modern stance can assist multicultural education to the extent that it "demystifies difference" (Guarasi & Cornwell, 1997, p. 20). Preservice teachers can gain greater understanding of difference in specific contexts. There is some evidence that, especially for white preservice teachers, community-service learning challenges notions about poverty; increases awareness of ethnic minority concerns; engenders trusting relationships with ethnically diverse people, and fosters commitment to working with urban youth (e.g., Hones, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Tellez et al., 1995).

Cross-cultural engagement can be a first-step toward cultural understanding, commitment, and activism. However, empathetic views may not interrupt perceptions of superiority on the part of many preservice teachers. Guarasci and Cornwell (1997) speak to this point: they assert that community-based service learning must reach beyond empathy to "approach issues of social boundaries, personal identity, justice, political efficacy, and community-building" (p. 25). To the extent that post-modern approaches connect empathy and understanding to issues of social justice, they affirm the task of multicultural education.

The table below delineates philosophic orientations to community service learning. Also, it indicates potentials and problems of each stance for multicultural education.

Philosophical Framework for Community Service Learning				
Philosophy	Sense of Self	Vision of Society	Goal of Service Learning	(Mis) Match with Multicultural Education
Functional/Spiritual	Individualist Instrumental Humane	Harmonious Industrious	Provide charity for less fortunate, Redress problems through volunteerism, foster altruism	Stimulates giving, but leaves deficit views intact, glosses over problems of inequality
Liberal	Autonomous Rational Civic	Rights Based Principled Justice Participatory democracy	Assume civic responsibility, Work toward justice as equal rights and opportunities, promote civic participation	Rights-based arguments assist equality, but treats people as unencumbered actors, actually social location affects rights
Communitarian	Collective Collaborative Democratic	Communal Pragmatic Progressive	Communicate with others, develop common interests, work toward common goals, build consensual community	Community-building is a goal, but commonality may mask diversity, common good may reflect dominate views
Radical Democratic	Diverse Activist Political Coalescive	Pluralistic and democratic (use democratic processes to advocate for social equality)	Use rights to fight discrimination, discover equivalent struggles across groups, coalesce to improve social welfare, foster change	Complementary, dominance challenged, multiple views of freedom encouraged, multicultural education as social movement
Post-modern	Relational Empathetic Border-crosser	Pluralistic Decentered Humanistic	Empathize with others as equals, foster dialogue across differences, collaborate, construct connections	Demystifies differences, builds trusting relationships, develops caring self, but must really "hear," work *with* others

Multicultural Education and Service Learning: A Summary

Multicultural education seems to be a communitarian, radically democratic, and post-

modern project. From a communitarian and multicultural perspective, it is important to build community, yet define "our" community as a diverse collective. The construction of common bonds necessitates crossing cultural, economic, or geographic borders, and this process is fraught with difficulties. Common ground may be new territory, marked by new understandings, among multiple groups. Coalitions may upset normative power relations, as the ups work with the downs. Yet, the empowerment of disenfranchised groups is central to multicultural education. In order to support this view, community service learning needs to proceed in contexts characterized by leadership of those served and reciprocity between "servers" and "served."

From a radical democratic and multicultural stance, activism toward social justice is emphasized. Coalitions work toward fuller realization of democratic rights and ideals. The inherent challenge of coalitions is the embrace of pluralistic aims. Probably, coalitions will rest uneasy around multiple agendas. As multicultural education is, itself, a coalition of diverse groups aligned to fight for educational equality and equity, this view should resonate. However, the purposes of community service agencies often clash with this view, they provide services to marginal groups, rather than empower them. In this case, the role of multicultural education is one of critique, to push preservice teacher's understanding of beneficence.

Through the promotion of self-analysis, support of dialogue across difference, and emphasis of an ethic-of-care, post-modern views correlate with multicultural education. The power of cross-cultural conversation is real and tends to topple stereotypes and myths, at least the most overt. Reflective sessions can be used to reconsider deficit perceptions based on direct experience with people different from oneself.

Community-based service learning for multicultural education is a complex, multi-

orientational undertaking. Significantly, multicultural education is not well-advanced by functional or liberal notions of service learning. Yet, these perspectives are held by many preservice teachers, in fact a majority of those I have taught. This realization suggests that community-based service learning may mean one thing to the instructor, another to preservice teachers. Probably, communitarian and radical perspectives will be difficult to foster, and post-modern views of care and connectedness may be perceived through a charitable lens. The development of views complementary to multicultural education may require nothing less than comprehensive reconsideration of previously-held philosophic orientations.

Implications for Multicultural Teacher Education

This framework situates the aims of community-based service learning for multicultural education. It suggests possible dilemmas related to the utilization of some philosophies as bases for multicultural education. It provides reasons why service learning may not seem "critical enough." To some extent, clarification is sufficient; scholars will interpret this framework and distill insights in their own ways. For me, it is illuminating to know from whence I come and to realize the challenges I face. These realizations inform my approach to community-based service learning in subtle ways. For example, preservice teachers in my multicultural education course read biographic memoirs of ethnic minority individuals. Then, they wrote reaction papers in which they explored the life circumstances, struggles, and successes of the main characters. As I read the papers, I found myself sorting them into piles according to their philosophical bent, unsurprised at the height of the conservative and liberal stacks. In my evaluative comments, I raised questions to provoke reconsideration of philosophic views, and to suggest the outlines of a multicultural perspective.

Yet, other teacher educators may desire specific, pedagogic suggestions. What does this framework indicate for the use of community-based service learning as part of courses in multicultural education? Below, I exemplify approaches for community-based service learning which complement multicultural education.

Strategies for a Multicultural Stance toward Service

I suggest three strategies: 1) direct instruction in philosophical orientations, 2) utilization of philosophical stances as an analytical tool for reflection, and 3) development of assignments that foster communitarian and radically democratic views and nurture self-reflection. I illustrate these strategies with moments from my own classes, however, these samples are not exemplary. Rather, they indicate possible venues for philosophic inquiry.

In order to introduce varied philosophical stances, I employed a "define, compare, contrast, and illustrate" framework to analyze Kahne and Westheimer's (1996) article, "In Service of What?". Preservice teachers worked in small groups to compare service as "charity" or "change," to categorize examples from the article according to these concepts, and to suggest examples of their own. I added the idea of "community-building" to this framework and provided examples. Preservice teachers compared and contrasted this notion with the previous two ideas. Then, they considered which views of service were most respectful of and empowering for groups served. As a final point, we discussed how one might feel about the completion of service from each vantage point, including possible comfort and discomfort levels. Such an exercise can help preservice teachers realize that their interpretations and actions are situated in and impacted by philosophic orientations.

Typically, as a class, we reflect upon community service experiences biweekly, for 45

minutes. Two techniques are especially useful to probe charitable, stereotypic, or deficit views. As one technique, I ask preservice teachers to rethink descriptions of their experiences from an insider's point of view, as a parent or youth at the community site. Commonly, I draw upon prospective teacher's life experiences and upon direct investigation to assist these re-considerations. For example, during a reflective session, a preservice teacher assumed that youth attended the Boys and Girls Club because parents did not care and "dumped" children at the Club. I pushed this prospective teacher to rethink his perception from a parental view. First, I asked the class to share whether their mothers worked outside the home during their childhoods: 50% had mothers who did so. We explored the impact of this reality on our views of "normal" parenting and "good" after-school care. Next, I urged the preservice teacher in question to investigate his view by talking with parents who utilized the Club for after-school care. During a subsequent reflective session, I inquired about his findings. Based on his findings and our previous discussion, the class rethought the interpretation of parents as "uncaring."

A second technique is to utilize quotations from reflective essays, anonymously of course, to spur discussion. I select quotations that exemplify varied philosophic stances, and their incumbent dilemmas for multicultural education. For example, quotations that initiated reflection depicted youth at community service sites as "just like me," described girl scout troops as "at-risk," or indicated that service learners were sole role models for youth. Probing questions included: if you think that children are just like you, what life conditions are you likely to overlook, and if you consider children "at-risk" how might that help or hinder your responses to them? At times, I am assisted with reflection by "parent mentors," adults from ethnic minority groups and cognizant of local, community concerns. Parent mentors tend to express views which

challenge notions of preservice teachers. I have not returned to the framework of "charity," "change," or "community-building" as part of reflection, but this strategy might further contemplation of philosophic views.

Other scholars have described activities which foster critical views of community service learning (e.g., Hones, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Tellez et al., 1995). I find the "why?" paper detailed by Sleeter (1995) quite useful to guide inquiry about questions that emerge from community service. As Sleeter described this technique amply, I will not discuss it further. Instead, I will add one example to the strategies noted by others.

In my course, preservice teachers read the novel There Are No Children Here (Kotlowitz, 1991), participate in class discussions of the book, and write reaction papers to it. We begin our class discussions by sharing quotations from the novel in small groups and explaining the significance of the quotes to us. Small groups share their comments and particularly poignant or potent quotes with the larger group. Then, we relate our remarks to three themes that guide examination of the novel: realities of poverty, impacts of society on neighborhood problems, and responses of teachers and schools to youth. During one discussion, preservice teachers pondered the effects of urban "renewal" on families (in the book, low-income housing was torn down to make way for a university building, families then moved to high-rise housing projects which declined and harbored violence over the years). Additionally, as part of the discussions and the reaction paper, prospective teachers relate the story to their community service experiences and consider the impact of the book on their future teaching.

As Good As It Gets?

In this paper, I grappled with philosophic orientations to community service, some of

which hamper aims of multicultural education, and some of which demand perspectives foreign to many preservice teachers. I interpret the realizations engendered by this investigation as "what needs to be done," rather than as inherent shortcomings of community-based service learning for multicultural education. Although there are limitations to what preservice teachers may comprehend from service, there are advantages as well. The potential for fostering more community-centric, democratic, and respectful perceptions of marginalized communities cannot be disregarded. Probably, community-based service alone will not foster regard for community or concern with inequity, these views will need substantial support from other class activities.

Is this "as good as it gets?" Almost certainly not. Truthfully, many preservice teachers seem lodged in functional and liberal views that mitigate aims of multicultural education. However, to the extent that these perspectives can be identified and re-considered, community service learning has potential to augment multicultural education. If community service learning stimulates concern for community, queries about democracy, and connections with people different from oneself, then it approaches being as good as it can get.

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